

- ☑ Chicopee board gives pat on back (back page)
- ☑ 90.8 inches have fallen on Westover (back page)
- ☑ Get your free Celtics tickets today! (bottom left)

We're celebrities on radio airwaves

The Patriot Wing is a celebrity on local radio airwaves.

Country station WPKX 97.9, Springfield, is dedicating songs to squadrons and members of the 439th Airlift Wing.

Another country station, WPMV 95.3, Northampton, is asking for the names of Patriot Wing residents of Hampshire and Franklin Counties to be saluted on the air. E-mail DJ@WRSI.COM or call 585-9555 to submit names to be read on the air.

The morning personalities of Dave James and the "J" Crew of light rock WMAS 94.7, Springfield, broadcast from the Westover Dining Facility starting at 6 a.m. on Wednesday. Among their guests on air was Col. Thomas Mauzaka, special assistant to the wing commander, who touted on the air the breakfast prepared by Services as "the best in New England."

All three stations are broadcasting appeals on the air and their web sites for donations to help military members and their families through the Westover Family Support Center, Pioneer Family USO and the Red Cross.

Free Celtics tickets, bus For Wednesday's game

The Westover MWR program is offering 275 free Celtics tickets and free bus transportation for the Detroit Pistons game at the Fleet Center, Boston, at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 16.

The tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis to those with a military ID and their dependents. MWR is arranging free bus transportation to the game from Westover.

Sign-up for the tickets is being done at the Westover Fitness Center, which is open from 5 a.m. to 2 a.m. No reservations for tickets will be accepted over the phone.

The tickets are being donated by the Celtics to salute the Patriot Wing. Westover MWR is providing the free bus service.

For more information, call the Westover Fitness Center at Ext. 3958.

Fleet Services shines up air bridge



Fleet Services aerial porters SrA. Charles McNutt (left) and SSgt. Dan O'Flaherty prepare to work on an outbound C-5 from their high lift service truck.

Article and photo by MSgt. Tom Allocco

The "Westover welcome" is a well documented phenomenon. When people experience it, they remember it. Since the start of the surge, every Galaxy passing through Westover keeps the word moving worldwide that the "Westover welcome" is four star.

When people talk about being treated right, they are talking about a phenomenon that starts with 42nd APS Fleet Services. The aerial porters of Fleet Services are among the first people an inbound crew meets on the ground and the last they see when an outbound crew buttons up.

The Fleet Service aerial porters have the kind of job that's easy to overlook when it's done right. They're the ones who come to work every day and promise that when people leave Westover they will be able to say the "Westover welcome" included freshly cleaned and swept cabin and passenger area, the efficient delivery of flight meals and crew and passenger kits of coffee ups, water and other "expendables". For Westover aircraft they provide fresh pillows and blankets.

There's not a lot of glamour, but Fleet Services has no regrets. They work hard doing something that needs to be done, they are among the first and last at the aircraft and they get to drive big, monstrous vehicles on the flightline. It's not a bad job.

The big vehicle is a high lift service truck which carries the buckets of water, flight meals, cleaning gear and items to be delivered to the aircraft. The crew stabilizes it and raises it to the fuselage hatch on scissor lifts.

Making a delivery recently to an outbound aircraft were SSgt. Dan O'Flaherty of Canton, Conn. and SrA. Charles McNutt of Westfield, two 42nd APS aerial porters who volunteered to work 12-hour shifts in Fleet Services. Just because they are way behind the scenes, doesn't mean there isn't job satisfaction in Fleet Services.

"I work in human resources for Connecticut Institute for the Blind, sitting behind a desk all day. Here I wear a totally different hat. I enjoy it. It makes the time go by a lot faster," O'Flaherty said.

McNutt knows that he is contributing to the "Westover welcome."

"Just yesterday I was cleaning and someone said 'you know the only place I see this happen is Westover'. He actually said 'thank you'," McNutt said.

"When you're in Fleet Services you're giving somebody comfort. We're doing the best we can. Everybody's got a part to play in this thing," O'Flaherty said.

"Sometimes planes arrive after a long flight. They might have flown to Europe and back, been on lots of legs. We don't know what happens downrange. Maybe they

(continued on next page)

Fleet... (Continued from page 1)

haven't had the opportunity to be cleaned when it needed to be done. We have the opportunity here," he said.

Like any job, there's more to it than people realize. When reporting for their shift at 6:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m., they start with a briefing on flightline safety, reminders about customs and agricultural precautions for aircraft from overseas and other procedures. Under agricultural regulations, trash from overseas has to be treated with elaborate precautions. It's kept in a special locker, weighed and tagged. The number of bags is recorded and before they are taken to West Springfield to be incinerated.

Fleet Services is also responsible for doing an inventory of chains and tiedown devices and to replace them when needed.

"The briefings are good training. It reestablishes standards which we need to work by," O'Flaherty said.

"There could be icing conditions or thunderstorms, aircraft turning, parking. You need to be aware of that," O'Flaherty said. "In the winter the plane is colder than outside and in the summer it's hotter than outside," he said.

It's the aircraft which dictate the daily schedule for Fleet Services aerial porters.

During a shift, they could be working on up to two dozen inbound and outbound aircraft.

SMSgt. Miguel Colon is among the dispatchers who mark a board with inbound and outbound aircraft and send out Fleet Service teams. He sits behind a computer to track aircraft with a "flight follower" computer program which can track a plane from the time it leaves Ramstein AB, Germany or Travis AFB, Calif. and arrives at Westover.

A hectic schedule can mean missed meals because the airplanes come first. It makes you appreciate the small luxuries.

"There are no normal hours. You may only have time to eat donuts and coffee," O'Flaherty said.

"Yesterday the USO had homemade minestrone soup in the Passenger Terminal. Today there is turkey and noodles. Those USO women work hard for us. They're here every day," he said.

As long as there is a surge, Fleet Services will be sending airplanes around the world with a good word for the "Westover welcome."

"They're behind the scenes, but what Fleet Services people do is make it a lot more liveable for aircrews and passengers," said MSgt. Dan Witt, aircraft services supervisor.

Chicopee supports Iraqi Freedom troops

The municipal officials who represent the people of City of Chicopee have gone on record as supporting the men and women of American Armed Forces who are serving in Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Chicopee Board of Aldermen voted the expression of support on April 1. In a letter to Brig. Gen. Martin M. Mazick, 439th AW commander, Richard R. Goyette, president of the Board of Aldermen wrote that vote supports the "endeavor to secure the rights of the Iraqi people in their pursuit of freedom."

"The resolution further states that the Board supports all military personnel throughout the world fighting oppression wherever it may occur and that the war in Iraq will end soon and that all military personnel will return home safely.

The resolution was directed to President Bush.

Snowfall nears record

This is the winter that's number two, but tries harder. The Westover Base Weather Station on Monday recorded 2.2 inches of snow, which makes this the second snowiest winter since they started keeping records.

Since the first snowfall of three-tenths of an inch on Oct. 23, a total of 90.8 inches have fallen. The local record is 107.7 inches which came down in 1995-96.

And it's not over until it's over, warns Kurt Osgood, supervisor of the Westover Base Weather Station. He noted that last year winter weather continued all the way to May 18. That was a "B" UTA Saturday when enough snow fell to make driving hazardous and make cold, wet and miserable participants in a Team Yankee exercise in Dogpatch.

A late snowfall this year could set a record for longest snowy season, because the first snow on Oct. 23 was unusually early in an area where the first measurable snow usually falls between Veterans Day and Thanksgiving.

People will long remember the brutal weather of February with it's long string of below zero days and 28.7 inches of snow. That's more than the average entire winter snowfall of 25.6 for this area.

Osgood blames a change in the jet stream which dipped down in eastern North America, bringing down cold air which then came back up the coast to pound us as snowy nor'easters all winter.

Osgood said to be grateful you don't live around the Great Lakes where cold air picks up moisture from the relatively warm water and drops more than 100 inches of snow on cities like Buffalo and Syracuse, N.Y. every winter.

Pat Stats

Served since Feb. 2, 2003
3,758 passengers - 1,129 aircraft
13,754,086 pounds of cargo
Info from MSgt. Jim Garrity, 42APS

Meals

5,988 hot - 4,261 box lunches
Info from TSgt. David Beauregard, 439SVS

Fuel since Feb. 1

6,658,999 gallons of JP-8
Info from Jim Maloney, fuels

PATRIOT express

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Express-ions

